



General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

First Committee

24th meeting

Tuesday, 6 November 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Erdős (Hungary)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 64 to 84 (continued)

Action on all draft resolutions submitted under all items

The Chairman: I thank members for their patience. Important consultations have been going on. The First Committee will conclude the third phase of its work, namely, action on all draft resolutions submitted under disarmament and international security agenda items, in the course of today. This afternoon the Committee will take action on the remaining draft resolution, namely A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1.

Before proceeding to take action, I shall call on those delegations wishing to make general statements, other than in explanation of their position or vote on draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1.

Mr. Bakhit (Sudan): On behalf of the African Group, I should like to make a general statement on draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1.

First, I express our gratitude to you, Mr. Chairman, for your initiative in proposing the original draft, and for the painstaking efforts you made to accommodate the divergent views and proposals you received, from various sources, in order to arrive at the revision contained in document A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1. We realize that yours was not an easy task, especially in trying to match the "common denominator", as you put it yesterday, with the complex issue of non-proliferation. You worked hard and succeeded in

capturing the essence of the Committee's concern about the status of multilateral cooperation in disarmament and non-proliferation, and emerging global solidarity in countering terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The African Group would like to thank you, Sir, for incorporating some of its proposals into the revised draft that you presented to the Committee yesterday. Having said that, we would like to underscore the principle that no draft resolution is impregnable or cast in stone. A draft resolution is not a resolution until it is adopted by a vote, or without a vote. As we witnessed yesterday, oral revisions or amendments can be made to drafts before action is taken on them. So although the request for a postponement of action on draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1 may have come as a surprise to some, it was certainly not unprecedented.

I should add that the request was essentially to strengthen the resolve of the Chair to achieve consensus. In other words, we were determined to ensure the draft would be adopted without a vote. That is exactly what the Chairman wanted and that was why he made his appeal. Moreover, the request was prompted by the imperative, even at that late hour, to bring on board those members of the Group that still had some difficulty with very important elements of the operative parts of the Chairman's revised draft. The intention was that action should be taken as far as possible without any reservation expressed by an African delegation on the floor either before or after such action.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



On behalf of the African Group I should like to assure the Committee that the Group has always demonstrated flexibility in all negotiations on issues before the Committee. Indeed in the course of this session we were obliged to delete certain paragraphs of draft resolutions that are vital to the security interests of member States of the African region. We made concessions in order to ensure that those with divergent views on issues dear to us would at least associate themselves with our position without resorting to a vote.

I can assure you, Sir, that the African Group will continue to cooperate with other delegations on any issue before the Committee. Indeed we recognize, as I have no doubt other delegations also recognize, that disarmament and non-proliferation are essential to the maintenance of international peace and security. We also recognize that they are vital for the survival of mankind. As one of the most vulnerable areas of the globe in terms of security from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, Africa is determined to help build the common response to the global search in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. All I can say at this point of the Committee's work is that all's well that ends well.

The Chairman: As no other delegation wishes to make a general statement, the Committee will now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1, entitled "Multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and global efforts against terrorism".

I now call on those delegations wishing to explain their position or vote before action is taken.

Mr. Goussous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the countries of the Arab League, I should like to reiterate our support for the spirit of draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1. I repeat that today we find that we need to reiterate and reinforce multilateral international cooperation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and to strengthen international action against terrorism. By basing ourselves on this very important point of view, which is supported by Arab States, we wish to join the consensus on the draft under consideration, although we also endorse the consensus of the Arab States in the several reservations that have been made concerning the actual content of the draft and the way in which it was submitted to the Committee. We feel that any resolution submitted to

the Committee should be an instrument for negotiation, and should not be submitted on a

(*spoke in English*)

take-it-or-leave-it basis.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

However, our reservations will be limited to the first operative paragraph of the draft resolution, which contains the essence of the draft. An ambiguous principle is mentioned in that paragraph, namely,

(*spoke in English*)

"maintaining and strengthening universal norms and enlarging their scope".

(*spoke in Arabic*)

This mention is not suitable here. We repeat, therefore, that the draft resolution, which is indeed extremely important, should have mentioned categorically the total endorsement of States of the non-proliferation and disarmament treaties without any discrimination. Here I wish to state that this draft should have contained the words

(*spoke in English*)

"universal adherence to disarmament and non-proliferation treaties",

(*spoke in Arabic*)

as can be found in the amendment proposed by the African Group, which was officially requested and transmitted to you, Sir, last week. The omission of this expression will have some negative repercussions on the whole system of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Arab States are joining in the consensus on the draft resolution but nevertheless wish to express a reservation on its operative paragraph 1 for the reasons that I have just explained. I hope that these reservations will be reflected in the official summary record of this meeting.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your very timely initiative in presenting the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1. Cuba supports this draft resolution because we consider that it is very important that the First Committee should take a stand in the present situation in favour of

multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament and in favour of global efforts being made in the struggle against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The draft resolution submitted at this meeting represents an important step forward when compared with the first version that was put forward; it takes into account a number of the concerns expressed by certain delegations regarding the original text. At the same time, as you, Sir, yourself have said, the draft resolution to be adopted today is not ideal, nor does it fully reflect the aspirations of many delegations.

As is well known, the delegation of Cuba presented a number of amendments to the original draft. We are happy that some of them have been incorporated. We wish to thank the Chairman of the Committee, for example, for having taken into account Cuba's proposal to include a new preambular paragraph making reference to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. We are also grateful that there is a reference in the fourth preambular paragraph to all General Assembly and Security Council resolutions relating to terrorism.

Bearing in mind the little time that we have available and so as not to create any further difficulties for the Chairman as he endeavours to find consensus, Cuba decided not to press all its other amendments. My delegation would have preferred that the draft resolution explicitly refer to the central role that the General Assembly of the United Nations should play with regard to terrorism. We would have preferred that there be a reference to the need to completely eliminate weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, as this would have been a concrete contribution to the global struggle against terrorism. It is our conviction that as long as weapons of mass destruction exist, there is a very great danger of their falling into the hands of terrorists. Furthermore, although the fourth preambular paragraph refers to some specific resolutions, that should not be interpreted to mean that certain resolutions on the subject of terrorism are more important than others. We believe that all the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council are complementary and, taken together, they show the determination of the international community to fight the threat of terrorism. In spite of its limitations the adoption of draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1 would be a very significant achievement of the present session. For that

reason Cuba will give it its support and we hope that it can be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Lint (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the European Union I should like to make a short statement on draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1.

At the beginning of this session of the First Committee the European Union felt that multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation was needed more than ever in order to fight against terrorism. Of course no draft can be perfect but we feel that today there is a common denominator and a balance between the various interests that have been expressed on this very important subject and we consider that your draft, Sir, reflects our position very well. That is why the European Union is able to support your text.

The Chairman: The Committee will now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1. I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Sattar (Secretary of the Committee): The Committee will now take a decision on draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1, entitled "Multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and global efforts against terrorism", which was introduced by the Chairman of the First Committee at the Committee's 13th meeting, on 23 October 2001.

The Chairman: The sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1 has expressed the wish that it be adopted by the Committee without a vote. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to act accordingly.

Draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1 was adopted.

The Chairman: I now call upon those delegations wishing to explain their position on the draft resolution just adopted.

Mr. Méndez (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Venezuela wishes to say that it is pleased that the draft resolution has received support. That reflects the commitment of member States to the goal of disarmament and non-proliferation and the struggle against terrorism. Venezuela reiterates that multilateral action is the best kind of action to promote solutions of common interest, which by their very nature and scope require collective action based on dialogue and

cooperation. In the areas covered by draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1, the United Nations, with its experience and legitimacy, is the right place to make progress towards the strengthening of peace and international security.

The Chairman: As there are no more delegations wishing to speak in explanation of their position on the draft resolution just adopted, I call on the representative of South Africa who has asked for the floor to make a statement on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Mr. Du Preez (South Africa): Is this the appropriate time to make a general statement upon the conclusion of the Committee's work?

The Chairman: Yes, this is the right time.

Mr. Du Preez (South Africa): On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and other States associated with the Movement, I wish to thank you, Sir, for guiding the work of the First Committee to its successful conclusion. I should also like to thank the members of the Bureau and the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, staff members of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Sattar, and the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament for their role in assisting delegations during this session of the Committee. Last, but not least, I wish to thank Conference Services and the interpreters and translators who have been essential to the Committee's work.

Mr. Zaidan (Lebanon): I speak for Lebanon, in its capacity as Chair of the Arab Group this month. I thank you, Sir, the Under-Secretary-General, the Committee Secretary and everyone who has enabled the First Committee to conduct its work thoroughly, including those in the background, the interpreters, and so forth. We wish to thank you, Sir, for your patience and able leadership in conducting the work of the Committee. Even at difficult times you proved to have exceptional patience and understanding and you have truly cooperated with all sides concerned with our work. I should also like to thank you for your eloquence. We have heard you speak in almost every language, except perhaps Chinese. It is never easy being chairman, especially in the First Committee, and

you have proved that you are able to listen to all groups. Thank you very much.

Mr. Lint (Belgium) (spoke in French): At a time when the work of the First Committee is about to conclude I should like to say a few words on behalf of the European Union, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union, namely, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway as countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and European Economic Area.

We wish to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, for the efficiency, courtesy and sense of humour with which you have conducted the work of the Committee. We also congratulate you on your initiative, which has led to the adoption of draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.49/Rev.1 on which we have just adopted.

We also wish to extend our congratulations and thanks to all members of the Secretariat team, who have been able to meet the demands of all delegations. We thank in particular Mr. Sattar, Secretary of the First Committee, whose experience and serenity have been extremely useful to us. We also include in our thanks all the interpreters and translators who, as usual, have carried out some remarkable work, as well as those in charge of Conference Services who have given us essential logistical support.

In conclusion, we would like to express our appreciation of the spirit of cooperation that has been present here and we hope that that spirit of cooperation will always be present in our future sessions as well.

Mr. Bakhit (Sudan) (spoke in French): On behalf of the African Group, I should like to thank you, Sir, for having led the work of the Committee this year. I also express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General and the Secretary of the Committee, the members of the Secretariat and the interpreters for the excellent work that they have carried out this year.

Mr. Coutts (Chile) (spoke in Spanish): On behalf of the Rio Group, I should like to thank you, Sir, and your entire team for your hard work in achieving the success that we have enjoyed during the session.

The Chairman: I should like at this time to take a few minutes to make a short statement in my capacity as Chairman of the First Committee at the end of the Committee's work.

This year's deliberations in the First Committee took place in the aftermath of the horrible terrorist attacks in the United States. I might recall in this connection what Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his earlier report on the tragedy of [Srebrenica] in Bosnia when he stated that "evil exists".

Yes, we have become more conscious that we live in a dangerous world where evil exists, where conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction could be used for evil purposes, as a means of terrorist attacks against innocent civilians. Such sentiments were expressed during this fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly by practically everyone in various forums dealing with the issue of terrorism: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the main committees and forums elsewhere.

From the very beginning of our work in this Committee, it was clear that based on our own mandate, the mandate of the First Committee, we had to respond with seriousness and urgency to the requirements of the present time and redouble our efforts so that in this messy world real and substantive disarmament and non-proliferation measures could be undertaken. The Committee went through all the clusters in high gear, discussing and taking action on issues related to nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, regional disarmament, disarmament machinery, and many other items related to disarmament and international security questions. The statements heard by and the drafts submitted to the Committee represented the full range of issues that preoccupy us at present. On the whole we have had a thought-provoking and fruitful session of the First Committee, which took place in a constructive, sometimes tense, sometimes funny atmosphere. We adopted 44 draft resolutions and 6 draft decisions, 30 of which were adopted without a vote. I have clearly no intention of summarizing, let alone assessing, the results of our deliberations. That evaluation will be done by yourselves and your Governments. I just want to express my confidence that the political will to do more in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation will be preserved in each and every one of your capitals.

I would also express my special appreciation to all the members of the First Committee for having adopted without a vote a draft resolution on multilateral cooperation against terrorism. In the eyes of the outside world, this should be construed as a manifestation of an international consensus that the new challenges faced by the community of nations at the beginning of this century need a common response and that the global threats can be addressed through multilateral efforts. That is the essence of the action we took a moment ago in this connection, and I am deeply convinced that it does serve the interests of us all.

I wish to conclude my statement by thanking first, all members of the First Committee for the cooperation they have extended to me during this session. It was indeed a privilege for me to work with people so knowledgeable in the field of disarmament. In addition, I thank you for your support in my efforts to use the time and conference facilities allocated to the First Committee in the most effective manner, thus saving United Nations resources so badly needed for other activities. That allowed us to finish our work today, four meetings earlier than scheduled.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Vice-Chairmen of the Committee, Ambassador Milos Alcalay of Venezuela, Mr. Stéphane De Loecker of Belgium, Mr. Lee Kie-cheon of the Republic of Korea, and to our Rapporteur, Mr. Sylvester Ekundayo Rowe of Sierra Leone. I am grateful for their assistance and cooperation in discharging the mandates entrusted to us.

Let me, on behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf, offer our most sincere thanks for Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, as well as to the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Mohammad Sattar, and all his staff members in the Secretariat for their valuable and indispensable assistance.

Finally, I wish to extend my special thanks to our interpreters, translators, record keepers, press officers, conference and document officers, the sound engineers and all those who work behind the scenes to bring the activities of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

To those who fly back to Geneva or their respective capitals I wish you bon voyage.

Before concluding, I have had another request for the floor, from the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Matook (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am sorry I have to make a statement at this late hour in the meeting, but it behoves me to pay tribute to your efforts, Sir, your patience and your wisdom, which have contributed to the successful conclusion of the work entrusted to us under your leadership. That is clear to everyone here. We wish to thank the Secretariat, the interpreters and all those who have made efforts at the meetings of the Committee, namely the Member States.

We also especially wish to thank the members who supported the draft resolution presented by Iraq on

the effects of the use of depleted uranium in armaments. We hope that draft resolution will help the work of the Committee to rid the world of all weapons of mass destruction — weapons that jeopardize international peace and security in this world of ours.

The Chairman: If there is nothing else we can do together at this point in time, I wish to announce that the 2001 session of the First Committee has thus completed its task and, with a heavy heart, I say that this meeting is concluded.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.